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Chairman: Mr. Bussacca (Italy)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 108: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/52/90, A/52/116-S/1997/317, A/52/348, A/52/437, A/52/447-S/1997/775, A/52/482 and A/52/523; A/C.3/52/3)

1. **Mr. Reyes Rodríguez** (Cuba) pointed out that the documentation for agenda item 108 had not been published in all the official languages by the date of the current meeting. In the future, the Cuban delegation would be unable to take part in the debates unless the relevant documentation was available in all the official languages at least 48 hours in advance, in accordance with clear General Assembly rules. Since the Geneva office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had been responsible for preparing the documentation, he asked the Chairman to inform that office of the Committee's concern at the delay.
2. **Ms. Quisumbing** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) apologized for the delay and explained that the understaffed New York Office of the High Commissioner, which had been responsible for ensuring that the documentation was issued on time, had not had the resources to do so, as it was in a situation of near-crisis. She appealed to the delegations to address the need to strengthen the New York Office so that the problem would not recur at the next session.
3. **Mr. Reyes Rodríguez** (Cuba) said it was the Geneva office that had been responsible for the substantive preparation of the documents, and thus for the delay in their issuance.
4. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children) said that, on the eve of a new millennium, quantum leaps in virtually every field of human endeavour coexisted with a capacity to inflict or to tolerate grave injustice, hatred and cruelty. The real measure of a civilization was its human quality, and specifically its treatment of children, who were its most vulnerable members and who represented its future.
5. Children in situations of armed conflict were being killed, maimed, sexually abused, orphaned, deprived of education and health and forced to become instruments of violence. Most contemporary armed conflicts were fought among compatriots within national borders; they were marked by particularly intense animosities and a tendency to ignore the rules of international humanitarian law. The most damaging loss a society could suffer was the collapse of its value system. Traditional value systems had forbidden attacks on children, women and the elderly in wartime, as

well as the destruction of crops, livestock and granary stores, so as to avoid destroying the basis for peaceful coexistence in the future. However, in modern conflicts, enemies sought not only to subdue, but to humiliate or annihilate each other, breaking traditional taboos in a single-minded struggle for power.

6. To restore a sense of ethical rootedness, it was necessary to rebuild a system of values at the local and international levels, first of all by strengthening institutions that inculcated values, such as families, teachers and religious institutions. That local process should be reinforced by the modern legal regimes developed at the international level. Efforts must be made to broaden awareness and application of international human-rights and humanitarian instruments containing provisions designed to protect children, particularly the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1949 Geneva Conventions, together with their Additional Protocols.

7. The Special Representative's agenda for action, as outlined in General Assembly resolution 51/77, was very ambitious. His responsibilities included advocacy to raise international public and official awareness of the plight of children affected by armed conflict; promotion of concerted action by the United Nations system and particularly by its field-level programmes, which had suitable expertise, resources and mandates; construction of partnerships with organizations of civil society; monitoring and assessment of trends which impacted areas related to his mandate; and development of specific actions to improve the situation of children affected by armed conflict.

8. His approach to those responsibilities would be marked by an emphasis on preventive measures and on actions to address the needs of children during, as well as after, armed conflicts; an emphasis on the non-political and impartial nature of his efforts; systematic information-gathering and verification of the facts to enhance the credibility of his work; adoption of a decentralized approach in which the Special Representative acted as a catalyst for the work of United Nations and other organizations and agencies; and selection of priorities within the broad scope of his mandate, to ensure that the projects undertaken were feasible and would produce tangible results.

9. He hoped that all peoples, regardless of political orientation, cultural tradition or religious affiliation, would see the protection and welfare of children as a common denominator and would agree to make the world safer for children in the next millennium.

10. **Ms. Calcetas-Santos** (Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography) said

that, since the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, she had carried out missions to the United States of America and Kenya, and had addressed the seventh meeting of First Ladies of the Americas. Moreover, the Government of Mexico had invited her to conduct a visit to that country in the coming weeks.

11. She had identified the justice system, the media and education as three catalysts which played a crucial role in relation to the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Since she had already explored the role of the justice system in her preceding report to the General Assembly, her current report (A/52/482) focused on the latter two catalysts, which were interlinked. The report discussed the international legal framework for protecting children from commercial sexual exploitation while respecting their right to education and information, and noted that children's right to such protection sometimes appeared to conflict with the right to freedom of expression.

12. The media discussed in the report included the print media, film, television, radio, the telephone and the Internet. The media's accessibility was a problem; for example, the availability of video cameras to exploiters of children made detection and apprehension virtually impossible. Likewise, the telephone was a useful means of communicating with victims and witnesses of abuse, but was also used for phone-sex operations. The exposure of children to pornography in any form was dangerous, since it could desensitize them and convince them that commercial sex activities were "normal" for children.

13. The report paid special attention to the Internet's role in the commercial sexual exploitation of children. On-line child pornography was dangerous not only to the children it portrayed, but also to children who might view such material. In addition, the possibility that children could provide information or arrange an encounter over the Internet could put them or their families in danger. Effective monitoring schemes involving the cooperation of the computer industry must be devised to prevent children from gaining access to objectionable materials without prejudicing their enjoyment of the educational benefits of the Internet. Such efforts could involve not only Internet service providers and content providers, but also children themselves.

14. The issues surrounding the use of the Internet were so complex that even some studies of the problem had not escaped allegations of abuse, as noted in the report (para. 102). Legal and legislative obstacles must also be overcome in order to make progress in banning pornographic material from the Internet; for example, the Supreme Court of the

United States had recently ruled that a federal law which had sought to curb indecency on the Internet was unconstitutional.

15. In her report, she presented a wide range of recommendations which were by no means exhaustive, but which could be helpful as starting points for making optimum use of the three catalysts identified for the protection of children. The report also contained recommendations on networking among the partners working towards that goal, including both Governments and non-governmental organizations. Regrettably, most countries had not yet devised an effective distribution of areas of responsibility and accountability, and most initiatives were still carried out on an ad hoc basis, with little coordination.

16. She appealed to the delegations to strengthen her position as Special Rapporteur by institutionalizing support and adequate resources for her work, which were almost entirely lacking. That problem was shared by all of the special rapporteurs on human rights issues.

17. She hoped that the United Nations system would consider children an urgent priority and send a strong message across the globe that children could not wait; that all Member States would conduct candid self-assessments to determine whether children were adequately nurtured and protected and whether adults were effectively barred from exploiting them; and that all countries could say with sincerity, before the end of the millennium, that they were making their best efforts for children.

18. **Ms. Quisumbing** (Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, New York Office) said she welcomed the fact that all but two States had ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The goal of universal adherence had nearly been achieved. The primary responsibility for implementing the Convention lay with States parties. However, given the scope of its provisions, which encompassed civil and political, as well as economic, social and cultural rights, there was a need for cooperation with international governmental and non-governmental organizations and civil society.

19. The international community's deep concern at the exploitation of child labour was reflected in General Assembly resolution 51/77. The Secretary-General's report submitted in pursuance of the resolution (A/52/523) contained a number of proposals to improve cooperation with a view to eradicating the phenomenon. The International Conference on Child Labour currently taking place in Oslo was a step towards that end.

20. The commercial sexual exploitation of children was recognized as one of the most serious violations of children's rights. The Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had identified three institutions which could play a pivotal role in the prevention of the commercial sexual exploitation of children, or, paradoxically, its perpetuation, namely, the criminal justice system, the education system and the media. In her current report (A/52/482), she had focused on the education system and the media. Awareness of the importance of the latter had been raised by the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held at Stockholm in 1996. Over the past year, the Special Rapporteur had made visits to a number of countries, including the United States of America, where she had examined the problem of dissemination of child pornography via the Internet.

21. The High Commissioner for Human Rights attached great importance to the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. A plan of action had been devised which would enable her Office to provide more effective support for the Committee, in particular by enhancing its assistance to States parties in meeting their reporting obligations. She urged States parties to act upon the Committee's recommendations with regard to the reform of national legislation, the establishment of national institutions for the protection of the rights of children, and the need for awareness-raising campaigns and education to disseminate the Convention more broadly. The report of the Committee (A/52/41) gave details of its work during its fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth sessions, when it had considered, *inter alia*, the rights of the girl child and of children with disabilities.

22. Mr. Lewis (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that, with the ratification of or accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child by all but two States, the goal set by the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights of universal adherence had almost been achieved. More important, however, was the very real commitment of States parties to the implementation of the Convention, and its unprecedented impact on policy-making worldwide.

23. There remained, however, a number of causes for concern, which UNICEF would like to highlight. They included the continuing commercial sexual exploitation of children and the problem of child labour. With regard to the latter, he hoped that the conference currently being held in Oslo would lead to a programme of action calling for the eradication of child labour, particularly in its most exploitative and hazardous forms. If that goal were to be achieved, the provision of universal primary education

would be crucial, since it provided an alternative to child labour.

24. Greater protection must be afforded children affected by armed conflict, not only those living in war zones, but also refugee and internally displaced children, child-headed families and children charged with war crimes. The use of child soldiers was the most egregious form of child labour, and he therefore called upon Member States to expedite the drafting of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the impact of armed conflict on children with a provision raising the minimum age for recruitment to 18. He further urged all countries to sign the convention prohibiting anti-personnel mines adopted in Oslo in September 1997. Moreover, the statute of the International Criminal Court which was shortly to be established must adequately reflect the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

25. In implementing the Convention, some States parties had not given adequate attention to the needs of the most vulnerable children, namely, children with disabilities, street children and indigenous children. He therefore commended the efforts of the Third Committee to focus on their plight.

26. Most important of all was the right to survival. One of the great achievements of the Convention had been the transformation of children's basic needs, in terms of health, sanitation, nutrition and education, into entitlements. Greater effort was needed, however, to tackle such problems as maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS and the resurgence of malaria; as well as persistent discrimination against girls in education. Of special concern was the disparity in terms of income between the richest and poorest countries, which was exacerbated by the decline of official development assistance. Yet the Convention made it clear that the international community must render assistance to those States, particularly the developing countries, which were unable to meet adequately the needs of their children.

27. With regard to the reform of the United Nations, he hoped that the rights of children would be adequately taken into account within the proposed United Nations development-assistance framework.

28. The Committee on the Rights of the Child played a leading role in ensuring implementation of the Convention. UNICEF planned to submit to the Commission on Human Rights a synthesis of the Committee's concluding observations on the reports of the 75 countries it had examined thus far, which constituted a unique body of jurisprudence on children's rights.

29. Non-discrimination was one of the pillars of the Convention, which meant that its provisions applied to every

child, no matter how vulnerable, no matter how marginalized, irrespective of race, gender or background. He hoped that, with the implementation of the plans and programmes of action of the major international conferences and the efforts of Governments and United Nations bodies, the twenty-first century would truly be the children's century.

30. **Ms. Kirsch** (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union, and also on behalf of Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, which associated themselves with her statement, said that, while she welcomed the almost universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the expression by a number of States parties of reservations running counter to its aims and principles called into question their true commitment to its implementation. She called upon those States parties to withdraw their reservations, and urged those countries which had not already done so to accede to the Convention.

31. The European Union welcomed the work accomplished by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (A/52/482), and noted with satisfaction the appointment of Mr. Olara Otunnu as the Secretary-General's Special Representative on the situation of children affected by armed conflict.

32. The World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Stockholm, 1996) had raised awareness in the international community of some of the most odious violations of children's rights, and had helped to change policies and attitudes. There must now be an effective follow-up to the Congress. The European Union, for its part, had agreed on a number of measures to strengthen judicial and police cooperation as part of a joint approach to combat crimes against children. The European Union looked forward to the completion of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. While the primary responsibility for implementing such instruments lay with States, non-governmental organizations could contribute to their application by bringing pressure to bear upon Governments.

33. In reviewing the implementation of the Convention, special attention must be paid to the rights of children with disabilities. She therefore welcomed the request by the Economic and Social Council that the situation of disabled children should be more fully reflected in reports by States parties to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

34. It was now widely accepted that the practice of putting children to work in dangerous or exploitative conditions must be eradicated. She hoped that 1997 would be viewed as a landmark in that regard, with the holding of a number of major conferences on the subject. She urged all social actors, including politicians, the media and non-governmental organizations, to build upon the impetus generated by those events to end the scourge of child labour. As a first step, Member States should immediately halt the worst forms of child labour and enhance the protection afforded children by bringing their national legislation into line with the relevant conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Another important step would be the provision of free, universal and compulsory primary education. There was also a need to carry out a study of the phenomenon of child labour with a view to finding lasting solutions. Finally, there must be greater international cooperation, in particular through the ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour.

35. Greater political will was needed to protect children caught up in armed conflicts. The international community required more information on that phenomenon, and she therefore called upon Member States to support the work of the Secretary-General's Special Representative on the situation of children affected by armed conflict. Some 30-40 per cent of the victims of anti-personnel landmines were children. In 1996, the European Union had expressed its determination to achieve the total elimination of those destructive weapons and the conclusion of an effective international agreement banning their manufacture and use. She therefore welcomed the adoption in Oslo in September 1997 of the Convention prohibiting anti-personnel mines.

36. The European Union was committed to the elimination of discrimination against girls in line with the provisions of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and called upon States to end gender discrimination in education, health care and nutrition, and to eradicate traditional practices harmful to girls.

37. Greater attention must also be paid to the plight of street children, who were often the victims of intentional ill-treatment. She urged all Governments and international organizations to enhance protection of those children.

38. Despite the recent resurgence of interest in the rights of children, there had been little tangible effect on the daily lives of most of the world's children. It was not enough simply to adopt legislation setting forth children's rights. True change would come about only through the establishment of conditions conducive to the enjoyment of those rights. While the primary responsibility lay with

Governments, the international community must lend Member States the support they required to implement the Convention fully.

39. **Mr. Harkin** (United States of America) said that abusive and exploitative child labour was more than just a humanitarian issue, since it also had development, legal and ethical dimensions. Social development was essential for sustainable development. Countries that failed to provide their children with an education were ensuring that their future adult workforce would be ill-equipped to fulfil their individual ambitions and participate in an integrated global economy. Millions of children around the world were forced to perform arduous and dangerous labour for the commercial gain of others. In spite of international conventions and national laws prohibiting exploitative forms of child labour, that practice was widely indulged in and reaped millions of dollars in profit in the globalized system of international commerce.

40. Most of the forced or involuntary labour to which children were subjected was not found in export industries. The parties principally responsible for exploiting children were adults in their own homelands. His Government had already acted to combat child labour and supported the multilateral efforts by international agencies in that area. The United States had taken a special interest in the work of the ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour to which it had contributed over \$5 million in the past three years, and looked forward to the adoption of a new ILO convention on child labour to be considered in 1998. His country had enacted legislation to end American complicity in international profit-making in goods produced through forced or indentured child labour by barring the import of those goods. He urged all concerned members of the international community to help that effort succeed.

41. **Mr. Andjaba** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), expressed the hope that the universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child would be achieved in the near future. The SADC countries welcomed the recent adoption of the convention prohibiting anti-personnel mines since southern Africa was infested with millions of deadly mines. He appealed to those countries that had the capacity to do so to support generously the Community's efforts to make the region a landmine-free zone.

42. According to United Nations estimates, 1.3 billion people were trapped in absolute poverty and their numbers were growing in every region of the world. In addition, aid to developing countries had fallen in 1996 to an all-time low. That situation constituted a major threat to the lives of

children and the communities in which they lived. Without adequate flows of development aid, the elimination of poverty and the creation of an environment for sustainable economic growth would remain elusive goals. Official development assistance should be increased to set up the necessary economic and social infrastructures vital for development. The decline in resources for development had major implications for the gains that developing countries had achieved thus far, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa.

43. The children of the African continent continued to experience an enormous amount of suffering. Efforts should be increased to support the progress that Africa had made, with particular attention to health and nutrition, education, water supply and sanitation, gender disparity, malaria, HIV/AIDS and the protection of the most vulnerable children. The scourge of HIV/AIDS was of great concern to the SADC countries. They had adopted a plan of action to deal with the disease, which was spreading rapidly and killing and orphaning millions of children all over the world.

44. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank had signed a memorandum of understanding to support the countries of sub-Saharan Africa in their efforts to promote access to safe water, environmental sanitation and hygiene education. Such innovative initiatives were commendable, particularly in view of the challenges that lay ahead.

45. It was estimated that, throughout the world, over 250 million children were working, both in developed and developing countries. Those children were often subjected to hazardous forms of labour, and many of them were denied education and were trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty. He noted with concern the large number of children who were physically and/or mentally disabled as a result of poverty, disease, forced labour and other forms of violence. Governments should pay special attention to children with disabilities and ensure that they enjoyed the highest physical and mental health as well as equal access to education. In spite of various international commitments and legal obligations, girls were treated as inferior to boys in many parts of the world. The question of the girl child had a special place in the Committee's deliberations and the draft resolution on it should not be merged with the omnibus resolution on the item under consideration.

46. **Ms. Moreno** (Paraguay), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group of countries, expressed concern at the situation of millions of children throughout the world resulting from adverse social and economic conditions, poverty, armed conflict, labour exploitation, and child prostitution and child

pornography. She noted with satisfaction the number of States that had ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and underscored the important work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. States parties should fully cooperate with that Committee, especially in implementing its recommendations. It should also have the necessary staff and facilities to carry out its functions effectively. In that connection, she stressed that States parties to the Convention should accept the amendment to paragraph 2 of article 43 of the Convention, which would increase the membership of the Committee from 10 to 18.

47. The countries of the Rio Group had always attached the greatest importance to the protection of children and actively participated in regional and national conferences and activities in that regard. They considered that the Declaration and Agenda for Action adopted by the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in 1996 were an important contribution to efforts to eradicate those practices. Their Governments were adopting the necessary measures to implement the recommendations of the Congress.

48. She expressed the Group's support for the work of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, which was a valuable contribution to the promotion and protection of the rights of children. The Group also fully supported the work of the working group on the elaboration of a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child related to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and looked forward to further progress. The States members of the Rio Group underscored the urgent need to alleviate the suffering of children caught up in armed conflicts and urged all countries to protect refugee and internally displaced children.

49. Governments, in cooperation with international and non-governmental organizations, should take the necessary measures to eliminate customs and practices that discriminated against and harmed girl children.

50. She noted with satisfaction the increased attention that the Committee on the Rights of the Child was giving to the rights of children with disabilities and reaffirmed the Group's support for the work of UNICEF in promoting and protecting the rights of the child.

51. **Mr. Fulci** (Italy) welcomed the appointment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General to study the impact of armed conflict on children.

52. While the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been almost universally accepted (with the notable exception

of the United States of America), greater awareness of its provisions and of the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child was crucial. He called for greater emphasis on training on children's rights, and for all necessary resources to enable the Committee - of which he was a member - to perform its tasks. The Committee had recently held a discussion on ways to protect the rights of disabled children, and its recommendations would be further discussed by a working group with a view to drafting a plan of action on the topic.

53. He called on all Governments to sign and ratify the convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines adopted in Oslo in September 1997, as well as to address the impact on children of other conventional weapons. He reiterated his proposal that humanitarian mine clearance should be integrated into all peacekeeping operations, and emphasized that countries and companies that reaped profit from the sale of mines should be required to contribute funds for humanitarian mine clearance and mine-awareness programmes. Specific programmes were needed to mitigate the effects of mine-derived disabilities on children; in particular, extended medical treatment, rehabilitation and psycho-social support should be provided for mine victims and their families.

54. Italy was deeply committed to the welfare of children and their full enjoyment of the rights granted by the Convention. Under the Government's plan of action for children and adolescents, a broad range of legislative, administrative and cultural measures was being taken. Such measures included recently approved legislation promoting children's rights and opportunities and increasing penalties for the sexual exploitation of minors.

55. **Mr. Wissa** (Egypt) said it was gratifying that the goal of universal adherence to the Convention on the Rights of the Child had almost been reached. Egypt had been one of the first countries to ratify that Convention, and the Government's concern for the issues involved was reflected in the establishment of a National Mother and Child Council, and in the support given to relevant national non-governmental organizations. His country had taken a number of measures to protect children, such as prohibiting their employment in hazardous work, setting a minimum age for admission to employment and regulating the hours of employment.

56. Some current attempts to address the issue of child labour were too superficial. The problem was related to the degree of wealth in a society and the extent to which that society could develop. Many children in poor societies worked in order to help their families to survive. Denying

children the opportunity to work could expose them to even greater dangers, force them on to the streets or into a life of crime. The issue could only be dealt with gradually, through the elimination of poverty, the provision of support for vulnerable families and the promotion of education. It was important for ILO and UNICEF to continue to cooperate with developing countries in that regard. Egypt had made its position clear at a number of international conferences: any attempt to create a link between respect for basic employment standards and international trade using the pretext of children's rights must be resisted; proper training must be available for children who had dropped out of school, in order to harness their potential, and donor countries must be asked to assist in funding such training programmes.

57. His country attached great importance to the elaboration of the optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child related to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and to the involvement of children in armed conflict. The establishment of a minimum age for compulsory military service would be a significant gain for future generations in every society. His delegation welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative on the impact of armed conflict on children.

58. Children living in areas under foreign occupation and in situations of armed conflict needed special protection. Egypt called for a halt to the military activities that threatened the lives of civilians. In Africa and occupied Arab territories, including Palestine and Lebanon, an enormous number of children had fallen victim to acts of violence. He called upon all Member States to support development in Africa, where many children experienced poverty, hunger and instability. Securing children's basic needs would be the first step towards ensuring respect for the rights of the child in Africa and the rest of the world.

59. **Ms. Sugimori** (Japan) said that Japan welcomed the opening of ILO negotiations on a new convention on the most intolerable forms of child labour, and also noted with pleasure the recent holding of several international conferences on child labour in different parts of the world. In order to address that issue, Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and other actors in civil society must cooperate in the areas of social mobilization, education, and developing and enforcing appropriate legislation. In its development-cooperation policy, Japan attached great importance to education and provided assistance to developing countries in formulating educational programmes, especially those targeting the needs of street children. It also supported UNICEF efforts

to implement educational projects for girls in several developing countries.

60. She called for greater efforts to provide children with humanitarian assistance, protection and rehabilitation in situations of armed conflict. She urged Governments, international bodies and non-governmental organizations to take the necessary measures, in line with the guidelines adopted at the recent Tokyo conference on anti-personnel landmines, to reduce the number of mine victims.

61. Japan welcomed the appointment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General to study the impact of armed conflict on children. With regard to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, it was important to enhance awareness of the rights of the child and to implement controls in accordance with national laws. Following the 1996 Stockholm World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, the Government of Japan, in cooperation with UNICEF, had launched a campaign to raise awareness of the issue in its various aspects, including sex tourism. Japan continued to take an active role in combating sex tourism through implementation of national legislation and international cooperation.

62. **Mr. Lian** (Norway) said that Norway placed great importance on children's rights. The establishment of the Children's Ombudsman in 1981 and the post of Minister for Children's and Family Affairs in 1989 had been of great value in efforts to secure continued development for the benefit of children in Norway. The Government had also recently decided to incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child into national law.

63. The Government was also dedicated to directing bilateral development cooperation towards alleviating poverty, a major cause of infringement of children's rights, and supported the 20/20 initiative to ensure that development cooperation focused on basic social needs, including those of children. Norway had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child without reservation, and called on other nations to do so as well.

64. He urged Governments to act on the Agenda for Action adopted at the International Conference on Child Labour, held in Oslo in October 1997, through continued international cooperation, and expressed the hope that the Conference would serve to place child labour issues higher on the international agenda. The Norwegian Government had already pledged nearly \$28 million in additional assistance over the next three years for development programmes to combat child labour.

65. Norway welcomed the appointment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General to study the impact of armed conflict on children, and called for inter-agency cooperation and collaboration with non-governmental organizations in that field. It was also committed to success in the negotiations on a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child related to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and on a draft optional protocol related to the involvement of children in armed conflict.

66. **Ms. Reynolds** (Australia) urged the very small number of States which had not yet ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child to do so as soon as possible, and reiterated Australia's firm commitment to protecting and implementing children's rights, as reflected in its first periodic report, recently submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Government would give careful consideration to the Committee's recommendations in such areas as minimum ages in respect of employment and criminal responsibility, the situation of indigenous children and youth homelessness.

67. In addition to action at the national level, Australia was taking joint action at the regional and international levels to tackle such cross-border problems as trafficking, child sex tourism and child pornography. The Australian Foreign Minister had recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Foreign Secretary of the Philippines on joint action to combat child sexual abuse and other serious crime. The memorandum would complement action already being taken against child sexual abuse, including legislation enabling the Australian legal system to prosecute Australians for conduct occurring outside Australia. The Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID) was also providing various forms of assistance to developing countries for tackling the sexual exploitation of children.

68. Australia was developing a national agenda for action against the commercial sexual exploitation of children, and strongly supported the work on a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child related to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It regretted that the work had been slowed down by differing views regarding the scope of the protocol. In Australia's view, the scope should be confined to sexual exploitation, in order to avoid duplication with other international activities and instruments.

69. Australia welcomed the appointment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General to study the impact of armed conflict on children. As a strong supporter

of the elaboration of an optional protocol to the Convention related to children in armed conflict, Australia had been disappointed by the lack of progress in the working group, and urged it to make every effort to complete the drafting of the protocol at its next session.

70. Australia also looked forward to the adoption by ILO in 1999 of a new convention dealing specifically with hazardous and exploitative forms of child labour. That instrument, together with the elaboration of voluntary codes of conduct involving industry, international agencies and local communities, augured well for more effective action to eliminate the worst forms of child labour.

71. **Mr. Ferrer Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that the Committee on the Rights of the Child should periodically evaluate its working methods in order to ensure the necessary atmosphere of cooperation in monitoring the implementation of the Convention by States parties. Children were subject to serious dangers in all parts of the world. Child prostitution and pornography and the use of child labour continued to exist. The proliferation of armed conflicts, which weapons exported from the industrialized countries had made even more destructive, had had a traumatic effect on the lives of millions of children, resulting in death, mutilation and homelessness. National efforts to promote and protect the rights of children must be accompanied by a new philosophy of international solidarity in order to provide further resources to assist developing countries in that regard. Cuba hoped that the obstacles impeding the adoption of the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child could be overcome in order to strengthen the international legal framework in that area.

72. In the past 37 years, his country had given special attention to promoting and protecting the rights of the child, with the active participation of the population and assistance from various specialized agencies. The ongoing blockade of Cuba by the United States and the sudden halting of the favourable relations with the former Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe had not impeded progress in programmes for the benefit of children. Through free and universal education and health care, Cuba had achieved high levels of school attendance and a low rate of child mortality.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.



General Assembly

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Chairman: Mr. Busacca (Italy)
later: Mr. Wissa (Vice-Chairman) (Egypt)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 108: promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/52/90, A/52/116-S/1997/317, A/52/348, A/52/437, A/52/447-S/1997/775, A/52/482, A/52/523, A/C.3/52/3)

1. **Mr. Melenevsky** (Ukraine), after stressing the important contribution made by various United Nations bodies to the solution of the problems faced by children worldwide, said that there was an urgent need to adopt measures at the national, regional and international levels to alleviate the situation of children in many regions of the world, including children under particularly difficult circumstances, since that situation was constantly deteriorating. In that connection, his delegation commended the work of the Working Group of the Commission on Human Rights on the elaboration of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child against the participation of children in armed conflicts.

2. With regard to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, his delegation welcomed the first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in 1996, which had called for better implementation of the existing legal instruments within the United Nations system. It was important to ensure the full observance by Member States of the provisions of the Convention, and of the Programme of Action for the Prevention of the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography adopted by the Commission on Human Rights in 1991; at the same time, it was necessary to determine whether it was expedient to draft the optional protocol, since that work could duplicate the activity of other United Nations bodies in that field. In that connection, his delegation stressed the importance of the decision taken by the General Assembly in resolution 51/186 to convene a special session in the year 2001 to review the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children held in New York in 1990.

3. Abiding by the principles laid down in its Constitution and the decisions taken in international forums, Ukraine had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991; in addition, in order to coordinate the implementation of the Convention, and the provisions of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, Ukraine had set up an interdepartmental commission in 1996 with the task of considering the issues that required a cross-sectoral coordination of the implementation of the Convention and preparing annual reports on the situation of children in Ukraine; and had established programmes

entitled "Family planning" (1995) and "The children of Ukraine" (1996) which set forth concrete measures to be taken by the State and society in order to improve the situation of children. Lastly, Ukraine supported the recommendation in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action that States which had ratified the Convention should consider the possibility of withdrawing their reservations to the Convention in order to ensure its complete and effective application.

4. **Mr. Al-Humaimidi** (Iraq) said that, in line with the various international initiatives related to children, the promotion of children and of their welfare were a priority in Iraq's development plans. Thus, Iraq had adopted laws on child welfare (1982), infant welfare (1980), social welfare (1980), compulsory education (1986) and treatment of juvenile delinquents (1983); those legislative measures had culminated in Iraq's accession to the Convention in 1994. However, the considerable efforts that were being made for the benefit of children at the national and international levels were being hindered by grave violations of their rights, since, throughout the world, a great many children were victims of displacements of populations, drug abuse, sexual exploitation, corruption, armed conflict and malnutrition.

5. In addition, there were the children who were suffering from the effects of the sanctions imposed by the United Nations for political reasons, as in the case of Iraq. The economic sanctions imposed against Iraq had now entered their eighth year and had had destructive and tragic effects. Iraq's initiatives to help children, which had been commended by international organizations, had been seriously damaged by those sanctions, and the United Nations bodies working in that sphere were reporting that the state of health of children was continuing to deteriorate.

6. In Iraq, over 4 million citizens, mostly children under the age of five, were suffering from significant mental and physical damage. That appalling figure, and the appeals of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Food Programme (WFP), highlighted the need to meet the urgent needs of the Iraqi people. Malnutrition rates were rising, especially among children and women; water contamination and the deterioration of health services had led to an ever higher mortality rate resulting from infectious diseases and epidemics. In a statement made in Geneva on 3 October 1996, the representative of UNICEF in Baghdad had indicated that 4,500 Iraqi children under the age of five were dying every month because of malnutrition and preventable diseases.

7. The shortage of medical equipment, poor functioning of existing equipment and the lack of medicines and other medical supplies, resulting from the continuation of economic sanctions and the shortage of financial resources, made it extremely difficult to treat childhood diseases and save their lives. In addition, despite the significant efforts of Iraq's health institutions and the assistance provided by some humanitarian organizations and United Nations bodies, the situation was also serious for women and the elderly.

8. The mortality rate from diarrhoeal diseases in children under the age of five had been 2,260 in July, compared with 142 in July 1989, an increase of 1,491 per cent; in that same age group and on the same dates, the mortality rate from respiratory infections had increased from 98 to 1,032 (953.6 per cent), and the mortality rate from malnutrition had increased from 138 to 2,371 (1,618 per cent). The dangers faced by Iraqi children were more serious than those involved in direct military aggression, and those threats violated all their rights. Consequently, the first step to put an end to the suffering of those children and prevent their death was to remove the sanctions against Iraq.

9. **Archbishop Martino** (Observer for the Holy See) expressed the Holy See's dissatisfaction with remarks made the previous day about the Catholic Church and pointed out that the Church was one of the greatest sources for providing help and care to children worldwide.

10. It seemed inconceivable, but the tragic reality was that the future awaiting many children was prostitution, drug addiction, fighting as child soldiers, separation from their families, work in exploitative conditions, sexual, physical or psychological abuse, or dying as a result of armed conflict. According to the Executive Director of UNICEF, 650 million children were living in conditions of almost unimaginable suffering and want; an estimated 2 million were involved in prostitution, and over 250 million children were working in hazardous and intolerable conditions. Many others were dying from malnutrition, disease, lack of clean water and sanitation, drug abuse and life on the street.

11. It was time for the international community to address the problems affecting children effectively; in order to do so, it must not only seek out the causes of those violations of the rights of children, but also bring about solutions which were known to exist and which would work. Children were frequently the victims of human rights abuses because they were the weakest and most defenceless; for that reason, before considering and proposing policies to combat those abuses, it was necessary to understand clearly that children had rights precisely because they were human beings, who

shared fully in human dignity from conception until natural death.

12. Solutions aimed at eliminating violations of the rights of children must be rooted in the family, the basic unit of society, where children developed an understanding of themselves and the world. Where there are strong family ties, children grew up with greater personal stability, less vulnerability and more effective enjoyment of their rights, including the right to life and the right to education. Further, in the context of the family, children found those who most willingly and effectively afforded them protection. For that reason, great care must be taken to assist parents in order to enable them to exercise their rights and carry out their duties in caring for and rearing their children.

13. The Secretary-General, in his message in connection with the observance of the International Day of the Family in May 1997, had said that conflicts assaulted the very foundation of society — families. He had pointed out that it was necessary to restore the sacredness of the family as a bedrock of humane values everywhere and that only if families were protected from famine and fragmentation could they prosper and contribute to the family of nations that was the United Nations. The Holy See was convinced that the abuse of the rights of children must be brought to an end and that, in strengthening and protecting the family and the role of parents, the world's children would be protected from many of the evils that threatened them and would be given real cause for hope in the future.

14. **Ms. Narcisse** (Haiti) said that, on 8 June 1995, Haiti had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and that, under the 1987 Constitution, the Haitian State guaranteed children the right to education and provided for the physical, intellectual, moral and civic education of the population. Primary education was mandatory and education was the task of the State and territorial communities, which must provide accessible free education for all. In addition, the legislation provided for the establishment of public institutions to protect children in particularly difficult circumstances and had established a Juvenile Court and a High Court for Juveniles.

15. Nevertheless, the legislation was not being carried out and, therefore, was only a statement of intentions. It was calculated that, from 1990 to 1995, the rate of enrolment in primary education was 25 per cent for boys and 26 for girls. During the same period, only 47 per cent of the children who had entered first grade had reached fifth grade. In addition to that, there was a lack of specialized institutions for assisting children. Further, the situation of children in Haiti was critical because of poor economic and social conditions,

poverty, rural exodus, anarchic urbanization and family disintegration. As a result, her Government was redoubling its efforts in order to intervene in that field with such measures as the national programme for school cafeterias, the aim of which was to improve the school performance of children and achieve complete and lasting development in the long term.

16. With regard to street children, she pointed out that, according to a study carried out jointly in 1991 by UNICEF and the Social Welfare Institute of Haiti, it had been calculated that the population of street children in the capital, Port-au-Prince, had been between 5,000 and 10,000. Their average age was 11 and, although they were mostly boys, the proportion of girls, which had been 18 per cent in 1991 in Port-au-Prince, seemed to be on the increase. The lives of those children were characterized by a low level of education, pitiful hygienic conditions, improper nourishment, promiscuity frequently leading to child prostitution and homosexuality, the habitual use of narcotic drugs, and an everyday existence marked by violence. In order to cope with those subhuman living conditions, they sometimes resorted to theft, prostitution and other offences.

17. Children who carried out domestic work lived in atrocious conditions: they received room and board for performing domestic tasks and were usually the victims of the living conditions of the host families, which, frequently, could not meet their own needs. Those children, ranging from 4 to 18 years of age, were deprived of education, care and affection and were made to carry out work beyond their physical ability with unregulated working hours and in humiliating conditions. It was calculated that, in Haiti, some 300,000 children were living in that situation, 74 per cent of whom were girls and 26 per cent boys, in spite of the fact that the Labour Code of Haiti prohibited entrusting a family with a child younger than 12 for domestic work and penalized all violations and abuses.

18. Children were, therefore, among those sectors of the population that were the most affected by the economic, social and political crises. As a result, Haiti was convinced that international cooperation was necessary in order to eliminate the exploitation of children through work and all forms of child labour contrary to accepted international standards; her country also recommended that States should redouble their efforts not only in drawing up legislation, but also in supervising its implementation, and considered that the commitment to reconstruct a lasting social environment for the protection and development of children should continue to guide the activities by all States in order to achieve a greater survival rate, harmonious development and the effective protection of children.

19. **Mr. Al-Omar** (Kuwait) said that the Constitution of Kuwait included several articles for the promotion and protection of children's rights. They included articles on the family and children, and others on the protection of children from exploitation and from social or physical neglect. Kuwait had formulated a five-year development plan, providing for the creation of mechanisms for child welfare within the family, care of children in accordance with the principles of Islam, and participation by mothers in society and employment. Under the plan, the Government had established infants' schools and private day-care centres, and had set up a programme of mother and child health services, creating centres for immunization against poliomyelitis, measles and tuberculosis. Thanks to those measures, the rates of infant mortality and of mortality during childbirth had fallen to less than ten per thousand live births.

20. His Government believed that education was a human right and was of the utmost importance for the social integration of the child outside the family. Education in Kuwait was therefore universal, free and compulsory at the primary and intermediate levels.

21. Kuwait had suffered from the inhuman practices of the Iraqi invasion, which had been a flagrant violation of the rights of children in situations of armed conflict. Some Kuwaiti children had lost their lives, while others had remained traumatized by the consequences of the military occupation. Kuwait was therefore doing all it could to help those children by providing psychological and social rehabilitation services.

22. **Mr. Rahman** (Bangladesh) said that, despite positive developments such as the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the survival and development of millions of children continued to be threatened. The international community should therefore act urgently to address some of the specific problems affecting children, especially the exploitation of child labour, which was most widespread in the least developed countries. In order to address that problem in a humane and constructive way, while taking into account the country's socio-economic needs, Bangladesh had begun a process for the phased elimination of child labour. In 1995, it had signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding with the International Labour Organization and UNICEF to eliminate child labour in the garments sector, which was one of the largest employers of children. The goal of the memorandum of understanding, which provided for the education of the children concerned, was to address the problems of poverty and illiteracy, which were the factors directly responsible for the situation. The Government had also undertaken a basic education project to address the needs of working children in urban areas. That

process was working effectively and could serve as a model for other countries.

23. Concerning the problem of the commercial sexual exploitation of children, his Government believed that special measures must be taken to eradicate that crime and address its root causes. Such measures could be based on the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action adopted in 1996. Another effective instrument for combating that evil would be the optional protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Bangladesh also believed that concrete actions should be adopted to address the situation of children in difficult circumstances, including those with disabilities, street children, refugee children and children in situations of armed conflict.

24. Bangladesh had established national machinery for the promotion and protection of the rights of children. It had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted a national programme of action and a national policy for children, established a national council for children's welfare, and begun formulating a national plan of action for children's development up to the year 2000.

25. His Government was investing heavily in the education of children, in the belief that it was the fundamental tool for their development. In that context, it had adopted a 10-year action plan to address the special needs and the development of girl children, and to protect their rights. Legislation had been enacted to address problems such as early marriage, rape, trafficking in children, violence, sexual exploitation and child prostitution. The Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs had undertaken a project for the elimination of trafficking, kidnapping and sale of children in Bangladesh. Finally, his Government wished to express its appreciation to various United Nations agencies, particularly UNICEF, for their support in promoting the socio-economic development of Bangladesh and improving the condition of children.

26. **Ms. Setyowati** (Indonesia) said that the situation of many children throughout the world remained critical, although measures had been adopted to improve it, such as the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the work of UNICEF, and that of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

27. Child labour was one of the most serious problems. Her Government therefore supported the Agenda for Action adopted at the conference on child labour currently being held in Oslo, sponsored by the Government of Norway. That plan would foster cooperation between the developed and developing countries. Given that poverty was the main cause

of child labour, her Government had allocated approximately 30 per cent of its national development budget to social development programmes, but it would need assistance from other States for that purpose, as well as the fulfilment of commitments for official development assistance. Her Government estimated that between two and three million children below the age of 15 were working in Indonesia, particularly in rural areas, where children began to help their parents at an early age. Also, because of the country's industrialization, children had begun working in urban areas.

28. Her Government had taken measures to try to address the problem of child exploitation in a comprehensive manner. In addition to implementing poverty alleviation programmes, it had taken action in a number of key areas. For instance, it had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which had been translated into the national language and had been disseminated in order to facilitate the implementation of a national programme on the survival, development and protection of mothers and children. The contents of the two conventions had been incorporated into the curricula of institutions of higher learning, including centres for women's studies in many universities in Indonesia. They had also been disseminated to journalists, the police, prosecutors and the judiciary, which should facilitate the implementation of the national law on juvenile justice and the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty.

29. Her Government also ensured the protection of the rights of the girl child and had therefore implemented a national programme within the school system to provide food for elementary school pupils, particularly girls in rural areas. It was also implementing a special programme aimed at preventing anaemia in prospective mothers.

30. Her Government viewed the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography as a new problem which required serious attention. In order to compensate for the lack of statistical data and national resources to eradicate that phenomenon, her Government had begun to mobilize the mass media and non-governmental organizations in order to raise awareness about those ills. In that regard, it should be noted that the Special Rapporteur had expressed appreciation to the Indonesian press for its efforts to increase the public's awareness of the problem of child prostitution.

31. The Government had made changes to the existing labour law and was considering ratifying Convention No. 138 of the International Labour Organization concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, which was

in line with her Government's target of nine years compulsory education for children throughout the country. Furthermore, Indonesia, which had been participating since 1992 in the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour of the International Labour Organization, had addressed the issue of child labour in its national development plan, and non-governmental organizations in Indonesia had begun to implement a national plan of action with support from the United Nations Children's Fund and the International Labour Organization.

32. Although her Government was attempting to strengthen its institutional capacity to enforce labour legislation and increase public awareness with respect to child labour, it recognized that legislation alone would not eliminate the problem of child labour. Elimination of that problem would require increasing children's access to education and reducing poverty.

33. **Mr. Ka** (Senegal) said that the situation of children continued to be precarious, especially in Africa. The international community should therefore seek a lasting solution to that situation within the framework of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit for Children. In his delegation's view, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Plan of Action adopted in New York should be implemented on the basis of a multisectoral, global, integrated and participatory approach. The process would require the formulation of dynamic social mobilization policies and the mobilization of national and external resources, as well as concerted action at the national, regional and international levels. The capacity of communities to formulate and implement children's programmes would also have to be enhanced. National programmes and plans should be compatible with other instruments such as the Beijing Platform for Action and with the conclusions of the World Summit for Social Development and the World Food Summit.

34. The international community was fully aware of the vulnerability of the world's children. Such vulnerability was evident in the areas of education, health and nutrition as reflected by the school enrolment, immunization and mortality rates, inadequate access to drinking water, exploitation, abuse and other problems. Senegal was grateful for the continuous support provided by UNICEF in the implementation of the national child welfare plan; the Fund's support was provided under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. For its part, his Government had formulated a special plan for working children and had ratified the various international conventions on child labour.

35. Despite the efforts made by African countries, the constraints resulting from the economic crisis hampered the effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Plan of Action, particularly in countries wracked by conflict. The work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child should be supported and the capacities of UNICEF and other agencies of the United Nations system that helped to implement such instruments should be enhanced.

36. The community of nations should include in its agenda the fight against transnational networks engaged in child trafficking and the sexual exploitation of children for commercial purposes, begging by children, the problems of street children, assistance for disabled children, the plight of children in strife-torn countries, and the education of girls.

37. **Ms. Kaba Camara** (Côte d'Ivoire) deplored the fact that documents on that agenda item had been submitted late and in English only. The United Nations should continue to be a multilingual Organization even in the face of the obvious predominance of the English language.

38. Fifty-one African countries had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the great majority of them had been involved in the formulation of the Declaration of the World Summit for Children. The commitment of African Governments had been demonstrated at the International Conference on Assistance to African Children, held in Dakar in 1992, at which a number of goals to be achieved by the end of 1995 had been set. The Conference had also decided to achieve the following goals by the year 2000: ensuring universal access to basic education, reducing malnutrition by half and achieving food security, achieving universal access to drinking water and sanitation, reducing under-five mortality by one third, and reducing maternal mortality by half. However, five years after the Dakar Conference, the data provided by UNICEF indicated that the under-five mortality rate was 175 per thousand live births (nearly double the world average) and that the maternal mortality rate was 980 per 100,000 live births, a figure that had not decreased since 1990. Moreover, few African countries had attained the objective of 90 per cent immunization coverage and, in 1996 and 1997, cases of meningitis and AIDS had increased. The factors that had led to the deterioration of the situation of children were the severe shortage of resources due to the decline in official development assistance by nearly 30 per cent; the drying up of external resource flows; the decline in commodity prices and the external debt burden; armed conflicts; the population explosion and unregulated urbanization; natural disasters; environmental degradation; drought; the AIDS pandemic; and malaria.

39. All that had had a devastating effect on African children. In Dakar, the development partners, the international financial institutions and the development organizations had committed themselves to contributing to the African Governments' efforts to fulfil the basic needs of the children. However, five years after the Dakar Conference, projects and programmes for children had declined.

40. Africa had committed itself fully to improving the life of its children whether in the context of ECOWAS or in that of the Great Lakes countries. Africa had institutionalized "corridors of peace" and "days of tranquillity" in order to facilitate the access of humanitarian organizations to the war victims. As far as national funding is concerned, the great majority of African countries had far surpassed the 20/20 initiative targets and devoted more than 20 per cent of their budgets to basic social services, health and education. Those efforts deserved the support of the international community.

41. It was too soon for many developing countries to consider measures to prohibit child labour since it was linked to poverty in the family. It would be advisable to look into the possibility of gradually reducing this phenomenon by setting a minimum working age, for example, of 14, and urging families to send their children to school. With regard to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, strategies should combine the fight against poverty, the education of children and their parents, the promotion of civic and moral values, and the strengthening of coercive measures against adults guilty of those acts. She welcomed the decision by many European countries to bring to trial and sentence perpetrators of sexual crimes against children. As well, States should severely punish people using the media and the Internet to promote such despicable acts.

42. She called upon all Member States to strengthen cooperation with a view to eradicating the inhuman practices that placed the lives of children in danger and her country supported the efforts of poor countries to promote the survival, protection and development of children. The objectives set at Dakar could be achieved since only eight cents protected a child against oral dehydration, seven cents protected it against onchocerciasis, 15 dollars vaccinated it against six of the main childhood illnesses and 150 dollars provided drinking water for a town of 250 inhabitants.

43. **Ms. Nicodemus (Brazil)** said that, notwithstanding the almost universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there was still a glaring gap between the principles enshrined in the Convention and the daily violations of children's basic rights worldwide. Both the international community as a whole and individual Member

States shared the responsibility to bring about conditions favourable to the full exercise of the rights of children.

44. Her country was proud of having already attained most of the goals set by the 1990 World Summit for Children. The stabilization of the Brazilian economy had resulted in a general improvement of the living standard of the population. In only two years (1994-1996), the average worker's real income had risen by 20 per cent, while the percentage of poor people in the total population had decreased from 33 per cent to 25 per cent, which had benefited mostly children. A community solidarity programme had been set up to help needy municipalities develop their own programmes for basic health, education and sanitation and to channel existing resources to programmes that had a direct impact on children. According to a survey carried out in 2,500 cities, the infant mortality rate had dropped from 41 children per one thousand live births in 1992 to 31 in 1994, and to 17.6 in 1996. In addition, the number of children receiving health care because of malnutrition had declined by 50 per cent.

45. The public policies for education and health were being decentralized in order to empower local communities to control the allocation of public funds and participate in the decisions on how to use them. The National Congress had approved in September 1996 a constitutional amendment that provided for an increase in basic education funds from \$80 per child per year to \$300. Furthermore, the number of community health workers would be increased from 44,000 to 100,000 by the end of 1998.

46. Her Government attached great importance to improving the protection of children in especially difficult circumstances. In addition to drafting an optional protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, the international community should continue to pursue ways to alleviate the suffering of children.

47. Brazil had sponsored Commission on Human Rights resolution 1994/90, which had established the working group for the elaboration of a draft optional protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. That protocol was needed to expand the provisions of the Convention, in particular articles 34 and 35.

48. Brazil had participated in the 1996 World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Although the conclusions of the Congress virtually ignored key elements of the problem — poverty, underdevelopment, social exclusion and unemployment — the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action constituted a positive contribution. Brazil had adopted a number of measures, including the establishment of a national network for

fighting the sexual exploitation of children, plans of action against the sexual abuse of children drawn up by state and municipal authorities, a national campaign against the exploitation of child sex tourism led by the National Tourism Agency, the Association of Hotels, airport authorities, air travel carriers and the press, as well as a toll-free hotline for reporting cases of the sexual exploitation of children.

49. In the area of child labour, her Government's public policies had focused on repressing illegal practices and attempting to eliminate the root causes of the problem. Among other measures, the President had launched a programme to provide monthly allowances to families so that they could send their children to school. The programme, which had initially targeted coal mines in Mato Grosso, currently covered sugar cane plantations, as well, and more than 22,000 families were receiving such allowances in the Federal District. In that connection, her Government had benefited from the technical cooperation offered by the International Labour Organization (ILO) through the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour.

50. **Mrs. Mangesho** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Namibia on behalf of the Southern African Development Community. It was encouraging that 191 countries had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, even though the original target of universal ratification was still far from being met. The United Republic of Tanzania had signed and ratified the Convention in 1991 and 1994, respectively, and was committed to its implementation and follow-up.

51. In view of the importance that it attached to children, her country had been represented by its Head of State at the World Summit for Children, held in New York in September 1990. Later, in June 1991, the National Assembly of the United Republic of Tanzania had approved and endorsed the goals set by the World Summit for the year 2000. With a view to fulfilling those goals, her Government had formulated a National Plan of Action for Children and had adopted a strategy for its implementation. The National Plan of Action took into account the following national priorities: combating malnutrition and diseases such as diarrhoea, malaria and chronic respiratory disease; combating iodine deficiency disorders and the HIV/AIDS epidemic; ensuring access to health, education, safe drinking water and sanitation; and the elimination of all forms of child exploitation. The strategy was designed to strengthen community-based systems for the analysis, management and advocacy of child-related issues at the household, village and district levels.

52. The goal of the World Summit regarding malnutrition had already been achieved for 20 per cent of Tanzanian children. The adult literacy rate was 68 per cent and primary school enrolment was 90 per cent. Currently, the fight against malaria and HIV/AIDS, the elimination of vitamin A deficiency, the reduction of the gap in education coverage and quality and the elimination of neonatal tetanus were priority issues. The United Republic of Tanzania devoted the Day of the African Child to reviewing the implementation of its National Plan for the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. The Government was also finalizing a national policy on the rights of Tanzanian children.

53. Girls, who were at a disadvantage owing to a socialization process that was different from that of boys, the imposition of oppressive rules and insufficient legislative protection, were becoming — in a context of poverty and deteriorating moral values — more vulnerable to acts of violence, such as defilement, sexual harassment, genital mutilation and forced labour. In order to bring such practices to an end, the education policy had been revised and various laws that were discriminatory in such areas as marriage and inheritance were being reviewed. Her delegation requested the developed countries to assist the developing countries in addressing the problem of children's survival and development.

54. **Ms. Grant** (New Zealand) said that New Zealand had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993 and submitted its initial report under the Convention to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 1997. Her Government was elaborating a strategy to address the specific issues highlighted by the Committee in its recommendations. In that context, non-governmental organizations played a constructive role both in assisting the Committee and in providing practical support to children around the world; the work of UNICEF was also worthy of special recognition.

55. The use of children in exploitative or hazardous work was a problem in many countries. As the problem was different in every country, it required a different solution in each case. Her delegation welcomed the ILO initiative to draft a new convention on child labour and hoped that such differences would be duly taken into account in that text. For example, her delegation believed that the establishment of a minimum age for entry into the workforce was not the best way to deal with the problem of child labour. In many cases, compulsory education up to a certain age coupled with protective measures against exploitative or hazardous child labour would be an effective way to solve the problem.

56. With regard to the commercial sexual exploitation of children, her Government encouraged other Governments to promote international cooperation among police and customs officials and to enact laws providing for the prosecution of persons who committed such crimes. Her delegation hoped that the draft optional protocol to the Convention relating to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography that was being elaborated would become a practical instrument as soon as possible and was committed to contributing to that process.

57. **Ms. Gustava** (Mozambique) said that children were exposed to various hazards even before birth: high rates of maternal infant mortality and malnutrition, inadequate health care and education, poverty, natural disasters and other socio-economic problems were serious threats to children. In particular, children were the main target in armed conflicts and became the most vulnerable refugees. After 16 years of war, thousands of Mozambican children were orphans, disabled or homeless; they had been forced to participate in the conflict, or had been the victims of anti-personnel landmines or objects of sexual exploitation. Most of the refugees and displaced persons whom the Government was attempting to reintegrate with the support of the international community and civil society were women and children. Special attention was being devoted to reuniting families — between 1988 and 1996, 14,605 out of 19,734 children had been reunited with their families — and special centres to address the specific concerns of street children had been set up.

58. Mozambique supported the global ban on anti-personnel landmines; in addition to demining activities, an extensive programme to educate children and communities about that danger had been launched.

59. *Mr. Wissa (Egypt), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

60. **Mrs. Ali** (Nigeria) said that concerted efforts were necessary at all levels in order to reduce violence against children, child labour, the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. In particular, legislation must be enacted in order to guarantee responsible use of the media, such as television, video cassettes and the Internet, in order to ensure that children were not used in pornography or exposed to it.

61. Nigeria had submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 1996 and was studying the Committee's comments on it; in that context, a decree had been adopted with a view to harmonizing Nigerian legislation with the provisions of the Convention.

62. Promoting the rights of the child, which, in Nigeria, had traditionally been protected within the framework of the extended family, was the task of the Child Development Department of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development, which was responsible for initiating relevant policies and programmes. In addition, the Ministry had established children's rights implementation and monitoring committees at the national, state and local levels; a national task force had also been established to promote the education of girls by identifying and combating practices that were harmful to their development. Other mechanisms for promoting the rights of the child included the Children's Rights Information Bureau and the publicity and technical committee for the survival, development, protection and participation of children. Her country also observed the Nigerian National Children and Youth Day and the Day of the African Child and had established "The Children's Congress", which constituted a forum in which children could discuss issues of importance to their welfare and exchange views with the authorities, parents and other groups that provided for their health and education.

63. In view of the impact of armed conflicts on children, disarmament was a necessary ingredient in the promotion and protection of their rights. Moreover, the fight against poverty, the worst enemy of family and child welfare, must be given priority in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

64. **Mr. Najem** (Lebanon) said that his country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 and its accession to it had brought about legislative changes in that field. A parliamentary commission had been set up in order to supervise the process of accession and UNICEF had participated in a national project to implement the Convention through an action plan. The Higher Council for Children of the Ministry of Social Affairs had drawn up an action plan for the survival, protection, and the development of children, which had made considerable progress in numerous areas.

65. In the field of health, Lebanon was undertaking initiatives through the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in order to ensure that each child had access to health services, in accordance with article 24 of the Convention. In the field of education and in accordance with articles 28 and 29 of the Convention, the national plan provided for mandatory and free primary education, which was to be carried out through modern educational methods in order to bring about the balanced development of children; in the area of protection and training, the action plan established programmes aimed at introducing education for peace in teaching, protecting children against the dangers of drugs

and sexual aggression, enacting laws on those offences and imposing severe sentences on those who committed them.

66. The children who had been living under the yoke of Israeli occupation in southern Lebanon and the Beka'a Valley since 1968 were enduring the results of occupation and terror. Their living conditions, education, social life and psychological state were impaired by the effects of the Israeli occupation policy, which was evident in the indiscriminate and daily bombing of towns in the southern part of the country. That situation, which was producing waves of emigration and had caused the closing of schools, had a negative impact on the health and behaviour of the children and interrupted their education. In that way, the Israeli occupation forces were violating basic principles of human rights and international instruments guaranteeing the rights of citizens under foreign occupation. Accordingly, Lebanon urged the international community to put pressure on Israel to make it put an end to that inhuman practice directed against the children of Lebanon.

67. **Ms. Gordon** (Jamaica) said that her country joined in the call to abolish child labour, particularly the most intolerable kinds. However, Jamaica was aware of the complex nature of the problem, including the reasons why children worked, a point that was stressed repeatedly in the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/523). Among the activities undertaken to reduce and abolish child labour, her delegation welcomed the initiative of the Norwegian Government to convene the Conference on Child Labour, currently being held in Oslo, and looked forward to receiving details on its outcome.

68. Jamaica fully agreed with the view expressed in the report of the Secretary-General that child labour was most often a result of poverty and that children worked because they needed to; therefore, if the work was to be eliminated, it must be replaced by something (education, food, shelter) which would make it unnecessary. In that connection, Jamaica noted the decision by the organizers of the Oslo Conference to focus on the issue of development as it related to child labour.

69. Jamaica also fully supported the Secretary-General's view insisting that the problem of child labour could not be addressed by only one actor in society (national Governments), but must be dealt with through collaboration among all the various actors: the international community, civil society and the public. That was an issue on which considerable work had already been done under the leadership of United Nations agencies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF. That meant that the only thing really left to do was to implement

national legislation and the recommendations of ILO and relevant conferences on reducing child labour, beginning with its particularly intolerable forms. Jamaica was attempting to do all in its power to reduce the number of child labourers in the country (albeit a relatively small number), with the invaluable assistance of UNICEF, ILO and other agencies. She urged other countries to do the same.

70. **Ms. Camerano** (Colombia) said that although her country had made progress with regard to the poverty indicators relating to the child population, its efforts aimed not only at providing children with what they required in order to survive, but also to improve their quality of life. To that end, Colombia had taken such measures as defining a legal framework for protecting the rights of children, with the support of intergovernmental human rights agencies and focusing on fulfilment of the commitments undertaken by Colombia under the treaties that it had signed.

71. The current situation of violence in the country, owing to the struggle against drug trafficking and other forms of crime and terrorism, had a negative impact on the human rights of the population, especially the most vulnerable sector, children. Accordingly, protecting the rights of children was part of the overall policy in the field of human rights, which constituted a priority of the Government. Colombia had been the venue for the regional consultation on the effects of armed conflict on children, held in 1996 under the auspices of the United Nations. With regard to caring for and protecting children, her Government intended to attend to the needs of the children affected by war.

72. Colombia had also signed an agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross to provide humanitarian assistance to children who were the victims of anti-personnel landmines and attacks and had begun to carry out programmes for children who were the victims of kidnapping. In order to help children displaced by violence, Colombia had set up a presidential commission, which coordinated activities in the area of prevention, immediate assistance and economic stabilization with the ultimate objective of the return of the displaced persons to their homes. In order to put an end to international trafficking in and exploitation of children, Colombia had set up an inter-institutional committee against the sale and sexual exploitation of children. A national plan had been drawn up against domestic violence, which had serious consequences for the development of children and perpetuated cycles of violence.

73. All those plans, programmes and strategies had been incorporated in the new Children's Code, which stressed prevention as an integral part of measures for protecting the

rights of the child. Furthermore, the 1991 Constitution stipulated that all citizens must ensure that the rights of the child were respected. Those measures would not be such a high priority if peace and well-being prevailed in the country. Although Colombia had made great strides in combating poverty, 3 per cent of the gross national product was still allocated to the war instead of social programmes. In that regard, her Government expressed appreciation to the countries that supported the peace process in order to promote the progress of society and the future of children.

74. **Mr. Borel** (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that there had hardly been any improvement in the plight of children who were the victims of armed conflict since the submission of the report on the consequences of those conflicts for children (the report of Mrs. Machel). It was, however, encouraging to see the mobilization of civil society and the international community on their behalf.

75. For the third consecutive year, ICRC had been asked by the Commission on Human Rights to take part in the working group on preparing a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which aimed, in particular, at raising the minimum age for the recruitment of children and their participation in hostilities. ICRC was firmly in favour of the minimum age being raised to 18, in conformity with the plan of action of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement on behalf of children affected by armed conflict.

76. First, the draft optional protocol must prohibit all participation — direct or indirect — by children in hostilities. If only some forms of participation in hostilities were prohibited, that would weaken the more comprehensive provisions of the 1977 Protocol II to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. However, in many cases, it was almost impossible to distinguish between direct and indirect participation in conflicts and between voluntary and forced recruitment.

77. Furthermore, the provisions of the draft optional protocol should apply to all the parties to a conflict, including non-international armed conflicts, because it was precisely in such conflicts that children faced the greatest risks. Humanitarian law applicable in such situations created humanitarian rights and obligations for armed groups, without in any way granting them international recognition. It was therefore possible from a legal point of view, and absolutely crucial from a humanitarian point of view, that dissident forces or armed groups should be bound by the provisions of the draft optional protocol and that they should respect its rules.

78. ICRC called upon States to make a positive contribution to the next session of the working group in order to draw up rapidly a text that would extend a greater degree of protection to children. In addition to enacting new rules, it was necessary to ensure effective implementation of the law, notably by establishing the mechanisms required to prevent violations. That was why the ICRC had proposed that the recruitment of children into armed forces or armed groups should be included in the list of war crimes falling within the purview of the international criminal court.

79. **Mr. Petersen** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) twice said that, as the report of Mrs. Machel had recognized, UNHCR was one of the first agencies to intervene in emergency situations. It was therefore able to attend to the needs of children affected by war, who constituted the majority of refugee and displaced children. It should be pointed out that 52 per cent of the 23 million persons assisted by the Office were under the age of 18.

80. In order to follow up the report of Mrs. Machel, UNHCR had drawn up an internal strategy supported by the Standing Committee of the Office's Executive Committee. The strategy had set out performance objectives for assisting and protecting refugee children and adolescents and had established a system that would improve staffing, training and budgeting in order to achieve those objectives. The High Commissioner had requested UNHCR directors and representatives to draw up plans of action showing how each office intended to implement the recommendations of the report. UNHCR would concentrate on five areas of particular concern: unaccompanied children, adolescents, education, sexual exploitation and preventing and monitoring the recruitment of children. The plans of action would be integrated into the annual programming cycle and field operations and would be implemented with the help of non-governmental organizations.

81. The protection of refugee children and adolescents was at the core of UNHCR activities throughout the world. In collaboration with members of the International Save the Children Alliance, the Office was preparing a training package that would combine field-based training for UNHCR staff and their implementing partners with pilot projects. In 1997, four major capacity-building exercises had been implemented and 12 more were planned for 1998. In addition, six senior regional adviser posts on questions related to children and adolescents had been established.

82. UNHCR strongly urged States to be guided by the principles and provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and take into account the rights of children and

adolescents in drafting the proposed statute of the future international criminal court. The Office also supported the ongoing efforts concerning the draft optional protocol to the Convention with regard to the involvement of children in armed conflict.

83. **Mrs. Castro de Barish** (Costa Rica), speaking also on behalf of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, said that she associated herself with the statement made by the delegation of Paraguay on behalf of the Rio Group. She underscored the fact that the Central American countries had signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child soon after its adoption by the General Assembly, as was indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/52/348). That support for the Convention had also been reflected in their support for the amendment to article 43, paragraph 2, of the Convention to increase the number of experts on the Committee on the Rights of the Child from 10 to 18, adopted under General Assembly resolution 50/155. She urged States parties that had not yet done so to indicate their acceptance of that amendment to the Secretary-General so that it could enter into force. She also urged States that had not yet done so to accede to the Convention as a matter of priority. Furthermore, the States parties which had expressed reservations should consider the possibility of withdrawing them since they impeded the effective implementation of the Convention in some cases.

84. The situation of children affected by armed conflict was cause for concern. In that regard, the report of Graça Machal was clear proof of all the suffering and the consequences of such situations. The Central American countries highly commended the statement made at the previous meeting by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict. The report submitted by Mrs. Ofelia Calcetas-Santos, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (A/52/482), was also commendable. Lastly, her delegation expressed its commitment to continue its joint efforts to promote and protect the rights of children throughout the world, particularly in the Central American region.

85. **Ms. Ouedraogo** (Burkina Faso) said that her country had submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in accordance with article 44 of the Convention and that the National Committee for Children, entrusted with following up and evaluating the national plan of action for children, was preparing the first periodic report. The National Committee's permanent secretariat conducted information and consciousness-raising activities with respect

to the national plan (1997-2000) and the Convention. The draft periodic report, which was being drawn up by consultants, would be submitted to a seminar for evaluation before it was transmitted for approval to the Council of Ministers, which would then forward it to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

86. In view of the fruitful cooperation between that Committee and United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations, Burkina Faso regretted that agencies like the World Bank and the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS had not established similar relations based on cooperation. Those agencies should include the question of the rights of the child in their programmes.

87. The States parties to the Convention should reinforce their policies aimed at guaranteeing the survival, well-being and development of children, who, in many cases, were the victims of mistreatment, sexual abuse and various types of exploitation. Account should be taken of the fact that developing countries were encountering financial, logistic, material, structural and technical difficulties in implementing the Convention. Burkina Faso expressed appreciation for the support provided by UNICEF in that regard. The international community should assume its responsibility for promoting respect for the socio-economic and cultural rights of children. Redistributing available resources for the benefit of children and converting debt to assist social programmes were unable to neutralize the impact of the developing countries' socio-economic problems.

88. One out of every four children from 5 to 14 years of age worked in the developing world and was subject to exploitation or risked his life. The basic causes of child labour should be studied at the national level in order to draw up programmes for solving that problem, giving priority to eliminating its most intolerable forms through poverty eradication, free and mandatory education, the strengthening of relevant legislation and its effective implementation, and the promotion of vocational training courses and consciousness-raising campaigns. Burkina Faso recognized the work carried out by ILO and UNICEF in that regard.

89. It was also necessary to consider the administration of penal justice with regard to prosecuting the persons responsible in cases involving prostitution, pornography and paedophilia and in order to preserve the integrity and dignity of children in such situations.

90. Her country hoped that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict would have the necessary financial and material means to

carry out his mission, would cooperate with States in setting up immobilization and social reintegration programmes for child soldiers and, to the extent possible, would establish contact with the armed groups involved.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

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Chairman: Mr. Busacca (Italy)

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Agenda item 108: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 10 a.m.

Agenda item 108: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/52/90, A/52/116-S/1997/317, A/52/348, A/52/437, A/52/447-S/1997/775, A/52/482 and 523; A/C.3/52/3)

1. **Mr. Carriere** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the war against child labour could be won in all countries in the next 15 years. Governments, employers' and workers' associations as well as civil society had changed their perception of the problem. There was a growing commitment on the part of Governments to take direct action against child labour. A large number of countries were seeking assistance from the ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, and many countries covered by the Programme had introduced legislative reforms and adopted action plans. Considerable progress had been made in understanding the problem of child labour. As many as 250 million children throughout the world were toiling simply to survive or overcome poverty. Most had neither the time nor the opportunity for any schooling at all. Millions were sold or forcibly sent across borders for work in industry, domestic service or sex.

2. Child labour was the single most important cause of child exploitation and abuse in the world. ILO was proposing a four-point strategy involving a political commitment to the total abolition of child labour, a programme of action against child labour, international assistance to allocate more resources to fight poverty and combat the international aspects of the problem, and the adoption of a new international convention to eradicate the most intolerable forms of child labour. The draft text of the proposed convention had been prepared on the basis of replies to an ILO questionnaire from over 100 Governments and an almost equal number of employers' and workers' organizations. The scope of the draft convention would include all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, the use of children in illegal activities, and the engagement of children in any other type of work likely to jeopardize their health, safety or morals.

3. The struggle against child labour must not be compromised by protectionist forces. Global action should be based on multilateral voluntary action and moral pressure, on cooperation rather than confrontation. The globalization and liberalization of world trade must be accompanied by the observance of the fundamental rights of workers, including the prohibition of child labour, in order to create a world environment that encouraged the establishment of a common set of values.

4. **Ms. Pham Quang Vanh** (Viet Nam) said that the increasing number of children victimized by various types of child abuse was one of the most tragic situations in the world. That problem was more acute in countries with economies in transition. Her delegation welcomed the great efforts being made by many Governments and United Nations specialized agencies in addressing that problem. Since the exploitation of child labour was most prevalent in developing countries, there was a need for a new comprehensive strategy focusing on development cooperation.

5. Education was one of the key solutions, since schools created the healthiest social environment for them. A supportive role should be played by the community and the State in providing affordable education of good quality, relevant to the needs of children and their families. The social and economic policies of countries and improved employment prospects were also important.

6. Viet Nam supported the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography with regard to the role of the United Nations and other international organizations in protecting children. Cooperation between families and schools was extremely important in protecting the rights and welfare of children. In accordance with its policy in that field, her Government had recently adopted a national plan of action to provide special protection for children covering the period 1997-2000. The plan set forth clearly defined strategies to be implemented in all sectors.

7. **Mr. Enkhsaikhan** (Mongolia) expressed satisfaction with the enormous work being carried out by UNICEF and non-governmental organizations to protect and promote the basic rights of children. Like other countries undergoing radical structural changes, Mongolia was grappling with fundamental challenges. Children and adolescents constituted approximately 70 per cent of the poor in that country. His Government had drawn up a comprehensive national agenda for the development and protection of children up to the year 2000 in accordance with the recommendations of the World Summit for Children. UNICEF had assisted the National Centre for Children by enhancing its capacity to improve planning and programme implementation.

8. His delegation welcomed the International Conference on Child Labour, held in Oslo in October 1997, which had adopted an Agenda for Action, and noted with satisfaction that negotiations on a new convention dealing with exploitative child labour were under way at ILO. As a State party to the Convention, Mongolia would spare no effort to

implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In 1996, his Government had adopted a law on the protection of the rights of the child. In October 1997, the Mongolian Parliament had ratified the amendment to paragraph 2 of article 43 of the Convention, which would increase the membership of the Committee on the Rights of the Child from 10 to 18. His delegation appealed to other States parties to do likewise.

9. **Mr. Rahmonov** (Turkmenistan) said that his Government recognized and respected the human dignity of every child and was committed to protecting children and other vulnerable population groups in the current phase of economic transition and restructuring. Earlier in 1997, Turkmenistan had hosted the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, convened for the purpose of defining strategies for implementing the Convention in Central Asia and Kazakhstan. The participants had adopted the Ashgabat Declaration (A/52/90, annex), in which they had committed themselves to bringing up children in the spirit of the ideals of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity; asked the Presidents of the participating countries to declare 1999 the year of protection of the rights of the child; decided to establish an inter-parliamentary group of countries to devise economically effective mechanisms for providing social services to children; and noted the need to pay particular attention to education for girls, maternal mortality and children in especially difficult circumstances.

10. Turkmenistan recognized the need for a sound legislative basis and adequate budgetary resources to solve the problems of children, and was grateful to the United Nations agencies and donor countries which had supported its efforts to implement the Convention. The few countries which had not yet acceded to the Convention should do so as soon as possible.

11. His Government strongly urged all Governments to sign and ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, adopted in Oslo in September 1997. To demonstrate its commitment, Turkmenistan had hosted an international conference on anti-personnel landmines, which had emphasized the importance of banning landmines in Central Asia.

12. **Mr. Meremi** (Niger) said that the world had become convinced that children had virtually the same set of rights as adults. Thus, the international community should not only maintain its objectives for children in terms of alleviating poverty, but should also look beyond that aim to address the

social protection and other important needs of children and to attack the root causes of poverty.

13. Niger had made substantial efforts to improve the education, health and legal and social protection of children. Between 1960 and 1990, enrolment in primary and secondary school had vastly increased. The aims of Niger's national plan of action for children included raising school enrolment to at least 35 per cent, increasing the percentage of girls in the educational system from 36 to 50 per cent and increasing preschool enrolment from 0.8 to at least 8 per cent. Those aims would be achieved, *inter alia*, through public awareness-raising and the setting up of an educational development fund.

14. Economic difficulties and drought-related food shortages had increased infant and child mortality rates since the 1980s. That phenomenon reflected poor health service coverage (32 per cent), an inadequate health-care system (one doctor per 75,000 people) and poor immunization coverage. By the year 2000, Niger hoped to increase immunization coverage to at least 80 per cent of children under the age of one year and to eradicate poliomyelitis. It would also undertake an intensive social mobilization campaign to combat sexually transmitted diseases, including acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Its strategies in the health sector included the promotion of community participation, the establishment of health districts, and decentralization aimed at involving communities in the management of health problems. It would also seek out, evaluate and train practitioners of traditional medicine, whose work could complement that of modern health-care professionals.

15. Niger's penal code did not recognize attenuating circumstances or allow the suspension of sentences for persons convicted of family abandonment, abduction of a minor, indecent assault, rape, procuring or incitement of a minor to immorality, sale of alcohol to a minor or facilitation of access to and consumption of drugs by a minor. However, the special juvenile courts provided for in Niger's legislation had not yet been established, for lack of adequate infrastructure.

16. Since 1993, Niger had established a number of institutions to care for orphans and children in difficult family circumstances. In the future, it planned to open a vocational training centre for minors in prison.

17. Niger would continue to implement national programmes in application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a matter of priority. It welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children and the

outcome of the Amsterdam and Oslo Conferences on child labour.

18. **Ms. Ben Yedder** (Tunisia) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the frame of reference for gauging States' commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of children. In Tunisia, the situation of children was taken into account in the elaboration of development and human resources plans. Since the country's independence, its children had benefited from a primary-health-care policy focusing on maternal and child health, access to free and compulsory education for both sexes on an equal basis, social protection and various forms of recreation to promote the harmonious development of the child's personality. Tunisia's comprehensive policy for the promotion of the family, which included a family planning component, had been strengthened over the last decade.

19. In 1991, Tunisia had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had adopted a national programme of action for children. It had designated 11 January of each year as a national children's day, and in 1995 it had instituted a presidential prize for the rights of the child, which was awarded annually to individuals, organizations, institutions and agencies that made outstanding contributions to the advancement of children's rights and well-being.

20. With respect to legislation, the country's educational reform sought to give children a sense of civic responsibility and patriotism and a culture of solidarity, and to teach them the principles of human rights and tolerance. The new Child Protection Code, adopted in November 1995, provided for a network of child-protection officers throughout the country to promote preventive action for children in difficult circumstances. The Personal Status Code had been revised to advance the rights of women and the family and to establish the primacy of the child's best interests. The Code of Criminal Procedure had been amended to promote legislation on children and to strengthen the protection of children from sexual exploitation. Lastly, a mechanism had been created to monitor the achievement of the objectives of the national programme of action for children.

21. In recent years, her Government had increased its efforts to eradicate childhood diseases through specific national maternal and child health programmes. As a result, by 1994, under-five mortality had fallen to 38 per thousand, and infant mortality to 32 per thousand.

22. To promote the development of children's personalities and individual capabilities, the Government had established a large number of kindergartens throughout the country, built many parks and recreational areas and organized various educational and activity programmes to occupy children

during school vacations. Child labour was prohibited under the law ratifying ILO Convention No. 138 concerning minimum age for admission to employment.

23. The international community's efforts to combat the sexual exploitation of children and to assist children in situations of armed conflict should be more vigorous and better coordinated. She welcomed the recommendations presented in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (A/52/482) and the Declaration and Agenda for Action of the 1996 World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Education and information were the key to preventing that scourge. Prevention should also be emphasized in efforts to protect children from armed conflict, and should encompass economic and social development issues as well as security issues.

24. Wider public awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols would help to develop a culture of respect for children in all circumstances. The international community must address the fact that, in the 1990s, over 90 per cent of war casualties were civilians, mostly women and children. She welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children and supported his ideas on preventive action. Lastly, she applauded the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in spreading awareness and in recommending State action in relation to children's rights.

25. **Mr. Khalid** (Sudan) said that social development continued to lag behind technological and economic development in many countries and that children were most severely affected. Developing countries needed the support of the international community to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

26. In accordance with its cultural and religious values, the Sudan attached great importance to the rights of the child and had adopted a national programme and suitable legislation to implement the Convention. Education was mandatory for both boys and girls from age six, and a law had been passed to expand pre-school education. A presidential decree provided for the establishment of nursery schools in the workplace and in communities. Children's cultural centres had been set up in the major cities. Sudanese children participated, and often distinguished themselves, in international forums for children.

27. In August 1997, the Government had organized a training session on the Convention for media professionals. Consequently, the latter had adopted a code for the

dissemination of the Convention to all sectors of society. In addition, the Government was disseminating the Convention in local languages and dialects.

28. In the southern Sudan, children were being exploited, used as human shields, forcibly recruited, tortured and killed by the rebel movement. His Government strongly condemned those practices and urged the international community to emphasize the need to respect the rights of children in situations of armed conflict, *inter alia* by completing the elaboration of the relevant optional protocol. In July 1997, the Sudan had participated in a regional conference on the subject organized by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the African Network for Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect. The decisions and recommendations of that conference were a first step towards identifying priorities for unified action to protect children, especially displaced children, child soldiers and unaccompanied refugee children.

29. The war in the southern Sudan had led to the phenomenon of street children. The Government had responded by establishing "peace villages" and homes to care for and educate such children. In an attempt to end the suffering caused by the war, the Government had signed a peace agreement with all but one of the warring factions, and was conducting high-level negotiations to try to convince the remaining faction to join the peace process.

30. The Sudanese Government was greatly concerned about unaccompanied refugee children. Every effort should be made to reunite them with their families or, at least, to ensure that they were cared for by their extended families and local communities. Efforts must also be made to end child labour, which was sometimes harmful to children's health and deprived them of education. The sale and sexual exploitation of children threatened the integrity of the social fabric, and must be combated by the entire international community. The report submitted by the Special Rapporteur on the subject deserved due consideration. While national efforts to protect the rights of the child were essential, international cooperation was the only means of guaranteeing full respect for all human rights, including those of children.

31. **Ms. Younos** (Afghanistan) said that, for nearly two decades, children in her country had suffered from the state of war and the poverty resulting from the breakdown of Afghanistan's economic and social system. Many children had been induced, by either communism or Islam, to participate in the hostilities, and had learned to bear arms and defend themselves even before learning to read and write. Regrettably, the war had left them no alternative.

32. Children's education had deteriorated over the years, not only because many schools had been destroyed, but also because girls were deprived of their right to education in Taliban-occupied areas. Boys in those areas were affected as well, since female teachers were not allowed to exercise their profession. The Taliban's reactionary view of religion ignored the fact that Islamic law strongly emphasized the importance of education for both boys and girls. The fact that about 70 per cent of the children in Taliban-occupied areas were not being educated threatened to create a generation of illiterates.

33. Afghanistan had been devastated by 17 years of war. Children were being deprived of their right to education and social development, and even of their right to life. Many children had been crippled or blinded by anti-personnel landmines or bombardments, with the result that Afghanistan had more handicapped children than any other country. Malnutrition and the lack of medical care claimed the lives of children every day. Psychologically traumatized by the war, Afghan children had come to believe that they were unlikely to survive beyond the age of 15.

34. Afghanistan was sincerely grateful to UNICEF, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), non-governmental organizations and donor countries for assisting child victims of the war. It was essential to safeguard the right of the child to health, nutrition, education, physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration. Her delegation wished to co-sponsor the draft resolution to be introduced on the rights of the child, which dealt with the situation of children affected by armed conflict. She hoped that one day, the fear and despair of such children would be turned to joy.

35. **Mr. Holmes** (Canada) said that, while much had been accomplished in addressing the problems of child labour, street children and the sale and exploitation of children, tremendous efforts were still required. In the area of child labour, there was a growing determination to end practices that exploited children. Forms of child labour which deprived children of their right to realize their potential and which exposed them to hazardous conditions contravened human rights.

36. Canada supported the initiative of ILO in developing a new convention to eradicate the most intolerable forms of child labour, and commended ILO and the Governments of the Netherlands and Norway for the commitment they had shown in addressing that global challenge. Canada was a contributor to the ILO International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour; its contribution was being used to develop and implement training in and use of practices for

the reduction and elimination of child labour, in concert with other committed countries.

37. Canada had also launched a child-labour challenge fund to support private-sector initiatives aimed at addressing exploitive child labour internationally. The Canadian Government would provide matching funds to the private sector to support initiatives such as voluntary guidelines, codes of conduct and product-labelling practices.

38. The almost universal adherence to the Convention on the Rights of the Child testified to the importance the international community placed on the promotion and protection of the rights of children. That success had placed considerable demands on the Committee on the Rights of the Child in terms of its capacity to review the reports of States parties. Canada therefore supported the amendment of the Convention to increase the membership of the Committee to 18.

39. The adoption of an optional protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography was an extremely important objective. The World Customs Organization had recently accepted a Canadian recommendation to recognize child pornography as contraband, and to develop policies and strategies to deal with such materials with particular emphasis on problems posed by electronic transmission. Canada had adopted provisions for the prosecution of Canadians involved in the sexual exploitation of children in other countries. Canada supported the work of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and particularly welcomed the Special Rapporteur's work concerning the media and the Internet.

40. His Government had recently ratified the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Inter-Country Adoption, which, together with the associated system of cooperation among States, would help to prevent abduction and sale of, and trafficking in, children. Canada was also carefully examining its defence legislation in order to be in a position to ratify a future protocol on children affected by armed conflict, and welcomed the appointment of a Special Representative on the impact of armed conflict on children, who would be able to play an important role as advocate for children in such situations.

41. Minefields killed or maimed an estimated 25,000 people a year; most of them were civilians, and many were children. As a result of its long involvement in peacekeeping missions, Canada was well aware of the lasting and devastating effects of landmines. His delegation welcomed the recent adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-

Personnel Landmines and on Their Destruction, and looked forward to the launching of the second phase of the campaign, a broad effort to remove the millions of mines in the ground and provide assistance to victims and nations coping with the devastating effects of those weapons.

42. **Mr. Tessema** (Ethiopia) said that the future of any country, developed or developing, depended on the upbringing of its children. It was unthinkable on the part of any developing country to expect future success and development in economic, political and social terms without giving due attention to the welfare of its children. The first challenge confronting Africa was to do away with malnutrition, disease, child labour, illiteracy and the scourge of armed conflicts, which were eroding the unity and cohesion of its peoples and undermining the fundamental rights of all, particularly those of children. All children were entitled to enjoy fundamental human rights and freedoms, and to grow up in an atmosphere of peace, love and care.

43. As a follow-up to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, his Government had implemented concrete measures to promote and protect the rights of children. Committees on the rights of the child had been set up at national, regional and local levels, and a high-level ministerial committee had also been established. Special attention was being given to the health needs of the family, particularly those of women and children, and a new education policy had set the goal of doubling primary-school enrolment to reach 50 per cent by the year 2000. The rights of minority groups were given special consideration; primary education was offered in several languages, and the Convention had been translated into eight languages and widely distributed. The Government had organized various workshops, conferences and campaigns, including a campaign to fight the spread of AIDS, under which 260 anti-AIDS youth clubs had been formed in schools to carry out educational activities, panel discussions and radio broadcasts on the subject of AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

44. A national committee on traditional practices was undertaking multifaceted activities to eradicate all forms of harmful traditional practices affecting the health and well-being of children and women, with specific emphasis on female genital mutilation. A workshop had been conducted in December 1996 to publicize the results of a study on child abuse and neglect; a workshop on the problems of street children had also been convened, and a pilot project was being conducted in five selected police stations in Addis Ababa, aimed at protecting children from being detained with adults and hard-core criminals, and to improve the treatment of children by members of the police.

45. In a world of diversity and disparity, children were a unifying force capable of bringing people to a common ethical ground. The international community should strive towards ensuring the spread of meaningful democracy and developing and strengthening the culture of conflict resolution. Ethiopia had suffered for many years from internal conflict, resulting in large numbers of unaccompanied, orphaned and abandoned children, and many displaced people and child refugees. Ethiopia had made considerable efforts to repatriate refugees and create the necessary conditions to allow them to lead normal and peaceful lives. A conference had been organized in Addis Ababa in July 1997 on the theme of children in situations of armed conflict in Africa.

46. His delegation welcomed progress in the drafting of an optional protocol to the Convention, aimed at enhancing the protection of children's rights in situations of armed conflict. The optional protocol must set firm and unequivocal international standards, and he called upon countries whose current practice did not meet such standards to cooperate and show flexibility in the spirit of the Convention.

47. His Government would continue tirelessly to implement the goals and provisions of the Convention.

48. **Mrs. Khuhro** (Pakistan) said that children were humanity's most important asset, and the source of inspiration for endeavours to build a better future. Yet they were one of the most vulnerable sections of society, exposed to all forms of exploitation, of which child labour was the most widespread. Child labour often caused irreparable damage to children's personality and hampered their physical, intellectual and psychological development. Poverty, under-development and illiteracy were obvious causes of the prevalence of child labour. In many countries, poor families could not afford to pay for their children's education; that in turn diminished chances of social advancement for those children in later years, since they never acquired the necessary knowledge to qualify for skilled employment. That perpetuated the vicious cycle of economic deprivation, illiteracy and child labour. Children who were most commonly subjected to the most intolerable forms of child labour, such as slavery and bonded labour, mostly came from population groups which were not only economically vulnerable but also culturally and socially disadvantaged.

49. High rates of infant mortality and malnutrition, and lack of adequate health care, educational facilities and opportunities for the development of their full potential were among the basic causes of violations of the rights of

children. The girl child was particularly vulnerable; she was neglected and discriminated against, owing to cultural attitudes which gave preference to boys. The girl child was also exposed to all kinds of abuse and exploitation. The Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had rightly focused attention on the importance of the media and education in the fight against child labour; they were key tools which should be used for the empowerment and advancement of children and the elimination of all forms of child abuse and exploitation. Special attention must be given to educational needs, ensuring that every child had access to free and compulsory education. That would go a long way to rescuing them from the scourge of child labour and other forms of exploitation. The girl child needed special attention, since women played the pivotal role in the development of healthy traditions in any society.

50. Her Government had recently withdrawn reservations concerning the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and national laws were being reviewed to bring them into consonance with the Convention. Pakistan had imposed stringent punishments for violators of the rights of the child, especially the girl child. Crimes against children such as sexual abuse, torture and forced labour, and offences resulting in death or disability, could entail capital punishment. All laws on child labour were being brought into conformity with the relevant ILO conventions. The Constitution prohibited slavery in any form, and the engagement of children in any factory or mine or hazardous employment was forbidden, as was the employment of children under 14 in specified areas. The Government was also adopting measures to eradicate bonded labour.

51. It was not enough to free children from work; they must be offered hope for the future. Her Government had prepared a comprehensive programme for the rehabilitation of child workers; 35 centres had been established for that purpose, to cater for their basic education, training, health care and recreation.

52. Neglect, abuse and exploitation of children could shatter dreams for a peaceful and prosperous world in the twenty-first century. Liberal investment in the health, education and development of children was needed to prepare them for a prosperous and harmonious future. She called upon the international community to pledge to take immediate action towards that goal.

53. **Mrs. Smolicic** (Uruguay) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by Paraguay on behalf of the Rio Group. The countries of that Group had participated in the preparation of draft resolutions currently

before the Committee on the subject of children affected by armed conflict and the eradication of the sale of children and their sexual exploitation. Such problems were complex and interrelated, and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States had proposed that they should be treated as a single topic, into which specific issues could be incorporated. Other priorities which had been identified included the plight of street children, the exploitation of child labour, refugee and internally displaced children, children with disabilities and the girl child, as well as the need for implementation by States of existing norms.

54. Her delegation reiterated its concern about the need to find a rapid and enduring solution to the suffering of children in armed conflicts, and assured the Special Representative on the impact of armed conflict on children of its firm support. It also reaffirmed its commitment to the recently adopted Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, the implementation of which would help to avert the suffering caused by the use of such weapons.

55. Uruguay had strongly supported action against the commercial sexual exploitation of children, particularly with reference to sexual tourism, the legal responsibilities of countries of origin and destination, and the creation of national and international networks for the exchange of information. His delegation hoped for a rapid and successful conclusion of the work of preparing the two draft optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the current delays in reaching agreement were a matter of great concern. The promotion and protection of the rights of children and their implementation deserved the dedication of the international community; it was high time that the international obligations undertaken by Governments under the various instruments were put into practice.

56. **Mr. Young Sam Ma** (Republic of Korea) said that the international community must take concerted and sustained action to ensure the safety and well-being of children, particularly in armed conflicts, and should support the adoption of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on children in armed conflicts, which was currently being elaborated. He welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict, whose important work had his country's full support.

57. Strong political will at both the national and international levels was essential in order to halt the sexual exploitation of minors. His delegation highly commended the work of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children,

child prostitution and child pornography and supported the recommendations on the role of education and the media in her report (A/52/482). The optional protocol to the Convention on that question should be finalized as soon as possible.

58. In view of the magnitude of the child labour problem, the Republic of Korea welcomed the efforts of the International Labour Office to initiate discussion of a new convention aimed at eradicating the most intolerable forms of child labour. He stressed that the fundamental solution to the problem of child labour lay in the elimination of poverty. Education was another essential preventive measure to counter the economic exploitation of children. Governments should make it a high priority to provide children with cost-free and unrestricted primary education. The Republic of Korea had recently raised the minimum working age and prohibited the employment of those under 18 years of age in hazardous work.

59. The rights of the girl child warranted particular attention. That serious issue required urgent, effective and coordinated action on the part of Governments, non-governmental organizations and the media.

60. Lastly, he underscored the importance of the family unit in protecting and promoting children's rights. As the future of humanity, children must be ensured their rightful place as successors to the coming millennium.

61. **Mr. Saleh** (Bahrain) said that an unprecedented number of States had demonstrated their support for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 191 States now having ratified or acceded to it. Nevertheless, it was extremely disturbing that, on the verge of the twenty-first century, as many as 15 per cent of the world's children lived in conditions of extreme hardship.

62. That included 100 million children who were being exploited or employed in hazardous work, 50 million living on the streets, and more than 100 million being mistreated or neglected in institutions. A further 20 million children were refugees or displaced persons, many of them psychologically or physically disabled as a result of armed conflict or natural disaster. Statistics also showed that 1.5 million children had died in the past decade as a direct result of war. For every child killed, there were another three injured, debilitated or psychologically scarred. His delegation therefore welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children in armed conflict.

63. His delegation supported the work of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the sale

of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It was imperative to devise further legal guarantees in that field.

64. Bahrain attached great importance to children as the young people of the future. It had made good progress in promoting the rights of the child, particularly in the fields of education and health. For instance, the mortality rate of children under five years old had fallen to 20 per 1,000, far lower than the average in developing countries, and many child-care institutions had been established.

65. He commended efforts to promote the rights of the child made by the United Nations and its relevant specialized agencies, particularly UNICEF. He urged the international community to make even greater efforts in order to promote the concept of the rights of the child.

66. **Ms. Gligorova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the transition to a market-based economy had adversely affected the enjoyment of social and economic rights by all citizens in her country, including children. Efforts were being made to improve the situation of children as a matter of priority. To achieve that goal, ongoing assistance by the international community was required.

67. Attention should focus on eliminating poverty and all types of child abuse and then on creating conditions enabling children to have a happy childhood and harmonious development. All States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child must make the necessary effort to ensure its implementation. In that regard, she underscored her Government's support for work currently under way on the preparation of the optional protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and of the optional protocol on children in armed conflict.

The meeting rose at noon.